

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 960

By Hood

A RESOLUTION creating the office of Tennessee Storytelling Laureate and designating Ernest “Doc” McConnell its first appointee.

WHEREAS, the art of storytelling plays a highly important role in our society, providing a means of human connection in our increasingly complex and mercurial world; it is central to such important human experiences as communicating, educating, learning, creating, healing, preserving heritage, negotiating, selling, preaching, entertaining, and campaigning; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee is a state with a rich history in the art of storytelling that has given rise to the annual National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, a small town internationally recognized as the mecca of storytelling for its innovative festival that ignited a global storytelling renaissance in its inaugural year of 1973 and now attracts more than 10,000 visitors annually to the event; and

WHEREAS, the State’s proud storytelling traditions are embodied in numerous organizations and institutions, such as the International Storytelling Center, the Tennessee Storytelling Association, the Smoky Mountain Storytellers, and the Cleveland Storytellers Guild, all of which seek to foster the formation of healthy, respectful, and productive relationships that arise from the hearing and understanding of another’s story; and

WHEREAS, citizens from all walks of life throughout this State, including librarians, educators, counselors, community workers, caregivers, producers, and preachers, engage in the art of storytelling and further storytelling’s transcendent power of education and healing that cross generational and cultural boundaries; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the State of Tennessee recognize its rich storytelling heritage in an effort to promote the preservation and perpetuation of this irreplaceable art and the services it offers the good people of Tennessee by creating the office of Storytelling Laureate,

which office honors those distinguished and preeminent ambassadors of storytelling who admirably proclaim and perpetuate our state culture, history, and lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, one such ambassador is Ernest “Doc” McConnell, who is to be the first Tennessee Storytelling Laureate; and

WHEREAS, a native of Rogersville, Mr. McConnell has made significant contributions to Tennessee’s celebrated storytelling heritage; and

WHEREAS, throughout the thirty years during which he has performed his renowned “Old Medicine Show,” Doc McConnell and his remarkable storytelling talents have charmed families across the nation, including appearances at the 1982 World’s Fair, the Minnesota State Fair, the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Tallahassee Museum, Milwaukee Radio Days, the Albuquerque Balloon Fest, the State University of New York, the Tennessee Valley Fair, the National Storytelling Festival, the National Barbeque Festival, and the Novello Festival of North Carolina. He has also performed in countless stadiums, celebrations, towns, cities, and universities all across the United States; and

WHEREAS, this talented artist also performed before the Tennessee General Assembly and collected stories from each member that were later compiled and published; and

WHEREAS, offering an innovative perspective of storytelling as a part of American life and everyday events, Mr. McConnell performs with a unique combination of Southern style and Appalachian flavor and has been featured on the National Broadcasting Company’s *Today Show*, National Public Radio’s *Folkways USA* and *Prairie Home Companion*, and *Hee Haw*; in the pages of *Newsweek*, *Quest*, *Nations Business*, *Mountain Living*, *Adventure*, and *Vista*; and on the recordings *Mile High Stories*, *World of Stories*, *Stories from the Heart*, *Live in Denver*, *Tuckers Knob’s Best Stories*, and *Tall Tales from Tuckers Knob*; and

WHEREAS, in the service of his art, Doc McConnell utilizes his expertise and desire to mentor future storytellers, and he has provided innumerable concerts, lectures, workshops, seminars, and classes focusing on the improvement of storytelling skills, the acquisition of a better understanding of people and their cultures through traditional storytelling, and the development of a keener sense of humor and imagination; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his renowned performances and presentations, Mr. McConnell has assisted in the foundation of both national and state storytelling organizations, including the Tennessee Association for the Preservation and Perpetuation of Storytelling and the National Storytelling Association; and

WHEREAS, the utmost integrity with which he has always accomplished the honorable goals of a storyteller has earned Doc McConnell the National Storytelling Association's Circle of Excellence Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award, and inclusion in the Tennessee Arts Commission artists' roster; and

WHEREAS, Mr. McConnell is perhaps most grateful for the love and companionship he shares with his wife, Guerry; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Mr. McConnell for his lifelong commitment to the State of Tennessee and its citizens and to designate him as Tennessee's first Storytelling Laureate; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby create the office of Tennessee Storytelling Laureate and designate Ernest "Doc" McConnell its first appointee, as we honor and commend him for his storytelling abilities and his contributions to the development and continuance of this historic Tennessee art.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation to Mr. McConnell with this final clause omitted from such copy.